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RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1213
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000124

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KPKO](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [MOPS](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: MINUSTAH SEES LIGHT AT END OF TUNNEL

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 2459
[1](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 2472
[1](#)C. PORT AU PRINCE 1796

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: MINUSTAH continues its push into the Port-au-Prince slums of Cite Soleil, Cite Militaire and Martissant and, according to their political staff, they are beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel. Residents of Cite Soleil are welcoming MINUSTAH more openly than during previous operations. The major gang leaders - Belony, Amaral and Evans - have been relatively inactive since MINUSTAH began targeted operations in mid-December. A series of successful arrests has led to a sense of optimism both within the slums and at MINUSTAH headquarters, and there is hope that the kidnapping days of the Cite Soleil gangs are numbered. End Summary.

Situation Improving

[1](#)2. (C) Poloffs spoke with Mike Center (strictly protect), deputy director of MINUSTAH's Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC), on January 17. Center outlined MINUSTAH's progress in breaking into the gang strongholds in Port-au-Prince's slums. In general, Center described the situation as "much, much, much better." Non-combatant residents of Cite Soleil are happier with MINUSTAH's presence than they have been in the past. In Bois Neuf (Cite Soleil), where MINUSTAH has attacked most heavily, the gangs are "painting themselves into a corner," but also making it more difficult for MINUSTAH to get to them in their fortified enclaves. The three major gang leaders in Cite Soleil - Belony, Amaral and Evans - have been staying close to their home bases in the last few weeks. Belony in particular barely ventures out at all. Although Center admitted MINUSTAH's first major operation on December 22 was a bit of a flop (ref A), he said their December 28 operation (ref B) was much smoother and coordination between HNP and MINUSTAH troops continues to improve. Kidnappings have slowed and there are not many hostages being held in Cite Soleil according to JMAC's

intelligence sources.

Operational Successes

¶3. (C) The biggest success of recent operations was the arrest of Belony's chief kidnapper, known as Zachari, on January 5 in Drouillard (Cite Soleil). Acting on specific intelligence pinpointing his location, MINUSTAH made the arrest without firing a shot, entering Zachari's house while he was drunk and asleep. In a separate operation on December 28, MINUSTAH completely destroyed the interior of Belony's house, injuring his girlfriend and just missing Belony himself as he stepped out to have a cigarette (ref B).

¶4. (C) Additional operations:

-- MINUSTAH and the HNP conduct non-targeted sweeps of neighborhoods during which they arrest anyone engaged in criminal activities. They did one sweep in Martissant on January 9, which yielded no arrests but put area gangs on their guard, and were planning another for January 18.

-- On January 15, MINUSTAH arrested 8 people in Pele Simone (Cite Militaire). The detainees, four men and four women, were taken from a building JMAC knows houses kidnappers, but Center was unsure if those arrested were actually involved in criminal activity.

-- Members of Belony's gang returned to the GoH two missing Russian machine guns from an APC that MINUSTAH troops abandoned in Cite Soleil in December (ref A). MINUSTAH had refused to negotiate or offer any concessions for their return. The weapons were inoperable without external electric power and used non-standard ammunition, thus they

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were of no use to the gangs.

Next Steps

¶5. (C) Moving forward, SRSG Mulet has to make the decision whether MINUSTAH will wait for Belony to show himself or to proactively go into Bois Neuf and nab him. They will also target Amaral and Evans, who are hiding away at the moment. Center stated that they would be much easier to catch if they tried to resume their kidnapping activities outside of Cite Soleil. Regardless, MINUSTAH needs to draw them out of hiding in order to arrest them. JMAC continues to look for targets all around Port-au-Prince, not just in Cite Soleil. Martissant, rampant with inter-gang violence, is of particular concern. The new force commander, Major General Carlos Alberto Dos Santos Cruz, has a lot of work to do to get up to speed, having just taken control of the troops on January 11. Center said the new commander needs to hit the ground running in order to keep the momentum going.

A View from the Political Branch

¶6. (C) The MINUSTAH Political Affairs chief and his deputy added their commentary on the current operations, also on January 17. Their feeling is that capturing or killing the three major gang leaders will break the back of gang activity in Cite Soleil, allowing for development projects to multiply in Cite Soleil. Though the killing of gang leader Dread Wilme in 2005 (ref C) did not have this effect, they believe the political atmosphere and attitudes toward MINUSTAH and the HNP are much more positive today -- residents are ready to be free of the gangs. This scenario, they noted, played out successfully in Bel Air after residents united with MINUSTAH to force the gangs out, allowing for development

projects to enter the area. Nevertheless, getting to the gang leaders will not be easy. They have retreated into neighborhoods where access is tight, and as MINUSTAH moves deeper into Cite Soleil the roads become narrower and troops will have to move in on foot instead of in their armored vehicles.

17. (C) Comment: Though this MINUSTAH/HNP security offensive may look to be less than advertised -- less than perfect execution, still no removal of the big three gang leaders, and holidays and change-in-command further delaying operations -- this initiative has delivered, for the first time since MINUSTAH's mandate began, a significant blow to the gang structure in Cite Soleil. Under SRSG Mulet, MINUSTAH appears committed to following through on this initiative and arresting Belony and company, though the time-frame is likely to remain longer than we wish. We also share MINUSTAH's assessment that there are good prospects for pacifying Cite Soleil. The relative stability of the Preval government and MINUSTAH's slowly expanding (if halting) reach into Cite Soleil over the past six months have had a cumulative effect. The population does appear ready to support a permanent GoH and international presence that can free them from the gangs.

SANDERSON